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December 15, 2005

The Honorable Samuel W. Bodman
Secretary
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Ave
Washington, DC 20585

Dear Secretary Bodman:

We are writing to express our deep disappointment with the Climate Change Technology Program's (CCTP) draft strategic plan. After excessive and repeated delays in its development, the plan lacks the detail, rigor and clarity necessary to accomplish the President's climate change goals. In short, the plan does not reflect the Administration's repeated emphasis on developing technology as the most important way to address climate change.

The delay in the report is baffling. The Climate Change Science Program's plan (announced at the same time as the CCTP in 2001) was completed in mid-2003, and it underwent two reviews by the National Academy of Sciences. Since the CCTP's announcement, the Committee has expressed an intense interest in the development of its strategic plan. Former Under Secretary Robert Card first told the Committee that a draft plan for the CCTP would be released by July 2002, then later testified that it would be completed by 2003. But the plan, as you know, was only released on September 22 of this year. Inexplicably, the Committee was not immediately notified.

Now that it has been published, we find the plan insufficient. It articulates no clear set of criteria for technology selection and prioritization, no timelines for completing individual programs or projects, no metrics for evaluating progress, no sense of how budget priorities across agencies will be developed, and, compared to the Climate Change Science Program, little open and public process for developing the plan and revising it in the future. (There is apparently no plan to have it reviewed by the National Academy of Science, for example.) Furthermore, the plan does not articulate any plans to evaluate policies that might be necessary to deploy these technologies in the marketplace. Sequestering carbon dioxide, for example, will almost always be more expensive than venting the gas into the atmosphere, but the plan is virtually silent on the best way to encourage the adoption of sequestration technologies.

While the plan does refer to principles for prioritizing investments that the CCTP has set out in a separate document, *Vision and Framework for Strategy and Planning*, it leaves undefined how the principles apply to the technologies described.

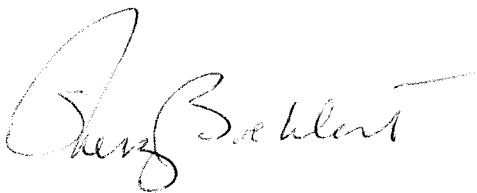
In developing the plan, it does not appear that criteria – such as a technology’s potential cost, its projected ease in making the transition to the marketplace from the laboratory, the comparative technical risk to successfully developing a technology by a variety of potential approaches, and the time frame in which a technology would be needed to be available in the marketplace if it is to significantly contribute to stabilizing emissions – were evaluated carefully or to have influenced the formulation of the draft strategic plan. Absent such criteria, it is unclear how the CCTP will prioritize investments and avoid becoming no more than a hodge-podge of programs and projects.

The plan also fails to explain how the CCTP’s technology programs are linked to the President’s stated goals for U.S. climate policy such as achieving “stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system” and reducing U.S. greenhouse gas intensity by 18 percent by 2012.

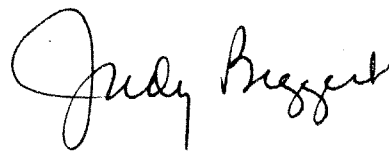
It is also unclear how the CCTP relates to other Administration climate initiatives. During the past few years, the Administration has launched the Hydrogen Fuel Initiative, the Methane-to-Markets program, and the Climate VISION Partnership. It has begun participation in an international nuclear fusion energy project (ITER), proposed developing a clean-coal electric power plant (FutureGen), and increased fuel economy for light trucks, to cite just a few examples. But it’s not clear from the draft strategic plan how these efforts – all of which directly support or provide incentives for the development of technology with a significant implications for greenhouse gas emissions – relate to the suite of research projects the plan describes.

We urge you to direct the Department to swiftly put together a more credible and complete plan. Shortly after Congress reconvenes, we intend to hold hearings evaluating the CCTP’s strategic plan. We hope the Department will have more to show for its efforts by then.

Sincerely,



Sherwood Boehlert
Chairman
Committee on Science



Judy Biggert
Chairman
Subcommittee on Energy